



Senate Bill 513

Supporting Both Ends of the Leash

As Amended January 3, 2022

SUMMARY

SB 513 builds on the success of the Pet Assistance and Support (PAS) Program of 2019 by requiring the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to develop and administer a program that awards grants to homeless shelters to serve the needs of pets for people experiencing homelessness, including shelter, food, and basic veterinary services.

ISSUE

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals experiencing homelessness is creating a “crisis within a crisis” for our state’s most vulnerable communities. On any given night in California, at least 150,000 people are without a home. Additionally, a 2020 homeless point-in-time count estimates 66,436 homeless people are living within Los Angeles County, and 41,290 are living within the City of Los Angeles. These are increases of 12.7 percent and 16.1 percent, respectively, from 2019.

According to the nonprofit Pets of the Homeless, an estimated five to ten percent of Americans experiencing homelessness own a dog or a cat. Further, the [British Journal of Occupational Therapy](#) stipulates pets provide warmth, security, and companionship to many unsheltered people. Some also suggest caring for a pet provides a much needed feeling of normalcy; for many people, the simple act of providing food and water to their pet may even help keep their humanity intact.

Unfortunately, many unsheltered individuals refuse housing and services if doing so requires them to abandon their animal companion. This happens all too often: a majority of shelters, motels and other assisted housing programs do not permit animals on their property, pushing potential beneficiaries to live on the street, in their cars or RVs, and in tent camps. Further, the Seattle University School of Law’s Homeless Rights Advocacy Project found that if owners decide to indeed surrender their pet in order to receive shelter, they are reunited with their pets only 15 percent of the time.

While the PAS Program was a great initial step in reducing barriers for pet owners experiencing homelessness, its first allocation of \$5 million in 2019 only stretched far enough to support 28 of the 49 shelters that applied, and was extended through a second allocation of \$10 million in the 2021 Budget. Meanwhile, pet ownership continues to represent a major obstacle to accessing shelter among unsheltered homeless adults. By providing further support for the PAS Program, we provide for individuals who otherwise would not receive essential services such as medical and living assistance, which are all the more important in the midst of this pandemic.

SB 513 (HERTZBERG)

SB 513 creates a permanent grant program for homeless shelters providing shelter, food, and basic veterinary services for pets of the homeless. Shelters must establish certain requirements, such as rules of conduct and responsibility regarding pets and their owners, crating or kenneling either near bunks or in a separate area, and food for both people and pets. The shelter would also need to have access to the services of a veterinarian, including spay and neutering services.



SUPPORT

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
Best Friends Animal Society
Hope of the Valley Rescue Mission
League of California Cities
Mars, Incorporated
People Assisting the Homeless (PATH)
Social Compassion in Legislation
WEAVE